

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

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AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S
CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK I. THE NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.
CHAPTER XIX. CONTEMPT.

MR. LEVERIDGE had been absent from England. He had been visiting Italy, chiefly, as he avowed, to study the carnations of Titian.

He received me cordially. I explained to him the position of my father.

"And Doris advised your coming to me? Good little girl! That was like Doris; it was worthy of her. It was like Phillis, too. She would have sent to me, I daresay, under like circumstances, knowing how glad I should be to serve her—and your father, too, of course; I mustn't forget him. Poor man! In The Bench, you say? Well, then, we must get him out. That's the first and the best, and indeed the only thing to do."

But already it had been made clear to me, that my father's release was not easily to be accomplished. Of late he had ceased to speak of it as at all likely to occur—almost, indeed, it seemed that he no longer prized his liberty; that he was completely reconciled to his life as a prisoner.

I had sought comfort and counsel of Lucius Grisdale. He shook his head. He was not communicative on the subject. Being pressed, he admitted that there were many difficulties in the way. My father, he said, was not a common man, and his case was not a common case. We must hope for the best; but it would not do to be too sanguine. And he bade me bear in mind that my father was now quite at his ease in The Bench; was well cared

for; really lacked for nothing. To a man of studious and sedentary habits, what, after all, was The Bench? where were its hardships? The student and the prisoner had much in common. Had my father been a man of action, leading an out-of-door life, longing ever for the woods and fields, and the open air, the case would have been different. But as it was, perhaps we had better accustom ourselves to the notion of his continuing in confinement for some time to come.

Uncle Junius quite accepted this view of the situation; and, by way of confirming his brother's statement of the case, cited the many instances he had known of prolonged captivity. Some of these, however, were derived, as I believe, from dramatic exhibitions at Sadler's Wells and similar establishments. Uncle Junius was apt, at times, to confuse his genuine experiences of life with certain artificial events and catastrophes, which he had studied from his seat as a musician in the orchestra. He was never quite able to distinguish the Fleet from the Tower, the Bench from the Bastille. And prisoners for debt were, in his eyes, hardly to be distinguished from those other more romantic captives of the Chillon or Ugolino type.

Nick was true to his original plan. He still held that my father's better course would be to take example by Jack Sheppard, and break from The Bench as that criminal had broken from Newgate. At the same time, he admitted that my father's age and habits rather disqualified him for feats of daring, and agility, and physical force.

"I wish we had money enough to pay all that's demanded of him and to set him free," I said.

"It's no use wishing," Nick observed. "We haven't got the money, that's clear."

"Can we earn it in some way?"

"In what way? How are we to earn it?" But I really could not tell him how.

"Can't we borrow it?"

"Who'll lend it?"

"Someone might."

"Who?"

Mr. Leveridge was the only person I could think of. The Grisdales, I knew, were as poor as ourselves, or very nearly so. But Mr. Leveridge was understood to be rich. What if Nick and I offered to charge our future earnings? For by-and-by, at some time in the course of our lives, we must, in the nature of things, be earning money somehow or other. What if we granted him a mortgage on our prospects, vague as they were, provided he advanced the means of obtaining my father's release from prison?

Nick scarcely approved the project. He was of opinion that people didn't part with their money on such indistinct terms. At the same time, I was quite at liberty to apply to Mr. Leveridge on the subject if I thought proper. And Nick promised that he would work his fingers to the bone, if that would be of any use in the way of helping my father to regain his liberty, or of repaying Mr. Leveridge for his assistance.

With some blushing, and stammering, and confusion, I stated the case to Mr. Leveridge.

"You're good boys," he said, nodding his head kindly. "You're nice boys. If I had chanced to have sons, I should have liked them to be exactly such boys as you. Just as if I could have had a daughter, I would have wished her like Doris; and she would have been like Doris, and like her mother, Phillis. You don't understand me, but I understand myself, and that's something. But about this business of your father's? It's very grievous. I'd help him if I could. I've helped him before, and I'd help him again and again, and yet again. It does me good to help him—that's the fact. I chuckle over helping him, and enjoy it. It's no credit to me, I know that. Perhaps, indeed, it's rather discreditable to me, if all the truth were told about it. But I like to help Phillis's husband—your mother's husband—and that's the fact. It's a comfort to me to know that I'm able to do it, and that things have come to such a pass that I'm looked to to do it. So in this present instance, though I'm not a rich man, and

don't pretend to be particularly benevolent, or beneficent, or anything of that sort,—but if I could have helped your father by putting down five hundred pounds—aye, I'll go beyond that; I'll say a thousand—a cool thousand"—he seemed to think this a far more admirable sum than a warm thousand—"I'd have done it; I would. And no mistake at all about it."

"Then can't we pay the money, sir, and let him out?"

"My dear boy, money won't get him out; at least, that's as I understand the matter."

"Then what will get him out?" I demanded desperately.

"Money will do many things—almost everything, in fact. But it's very little use in this case. I don't like to speak disrespectfully of money; for I know the value of it, and I know how very bad it is to be without it. But, to be plain, money's rubbish in this matter of your father's. You don't know what he's been put into prison for?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"Well, then, I'll tell you; only don't ask me to explain what it means, for I can't. He is in prison for Contempt."

"Contempt?"

"Contempt of court; that's what they call it. And Heaven knows what they mean. They don't know themselves; you may take that for granted. He's what they describe as a Chancery prisoner."

"Then must he stay there for the remainder of his life?"

"That's a question hard to answer. I can't answer it. I don't like to think of what the right answer to it may be. They tell me"—I understood that he had consulted legal authority upon the subject—"they tell me that he must stay where he is until he has purged himself of his contempt; that was the expression—'purged himself of his contempt.'"

"Does that mean," Nick asked with a puzzled look, "that he must say he's sorry for having been rude?"

"It means, my lad, for one thing, that he must pay costs—that's about it—and that, I take it, is about the meaning of a good many legal proceedings. There's a bill filed against him; why, he doesn't know; what about, he can't understand. But he's required to answer it all the same; which seems hard; but it's the law, and the gospel according to the Lord High Chancellor of England. So says the wisdom of Parliament, which is sometimes a good

deal like the foolishness of other people. He ought, it seems, to have demurred, pleaded, or answered. He did not know which was which, nor how to do any one of them. So he simply sat down, waiting to see what would happen next. That was easy and natural, but it wasn't correct. Chancery doesn't approve of people doing nothing; it's an offence in the eyes of Chancery. Because, if people didn't do anything, mischief wouldn't ensue, and the Court of Chancery would be nowhere; would be left high and dry, out of harm's way. So, in a thoroughly constitutional way, they lock him up for not doing anything. And as he doesn't know what to do, or how to do it, there he remains; and being a pleasant, easy-going, sweet-tempered gentleman—not at all of a practical turn of mind, or given to activity or industry of a useful sort—being, in fact, your father, you know"—Mr. Leveridge seemed suddenly conscious of our relationship to the subject of his remarks—"and a very superior man, indeed—for about that there's no question—there they will probably keep him until all's blue, the end of things in general arrives, and the Court of Chancery rises for the longest vacation it has ever yet enjoyed."

This was not hopeful news. Nor was it very explicit. But it comprised the most complete information I was ever to receive concerning my father's imprisonment. How he had made himself liable to the action of the Court of Chancery, so as to incur the penalty now exacted from him, I did not learn much more clearly than this.

Necessarily our hopes of his speedy release diminished seriously.

I addressed myself to Mr. Grisdale on the subject.

"You have known many Chancery prisoners?"

"Very many. Formerly they were always—or almost always—lodged in The Fleet. Now they are sent to The Bench. Poor devils! I mean, unfortunate victims of the infamous tyranny of our modern Star Chamber."

"My father is a Chancery prisoner."

"Yes, poor man!"

"Do they ever get out—Chancery prisoners?"

"I shouldn't like to say that they never get out."

"But of those you have known. Some of them have obtained their release?"

"No doubt. They died in prison."

He was, I could see, deeply sorry and

pained the moment after he had said this. His face wore a most anxious look.

"I didn't mean that, of course. I was speaking only in a general way. I should not have so spoken. Your father will be free—in good time—there isn't a doubt of it."

CHAPTER XX. RELEASE.

WE had our troubles, certainly. But others were not spared. It was a time of great depression, anxiety, dread. There was political difficulty; there was pecuniary distress. Bad harvest had followed bad harvest; provisions were dear and money was scarce; bankruptcy had fallen like a blight upon the City; the money-market was convulsed; the Bank of England was seized with ague-like tremblings and shiverings. Men were sore, and suspicious, and aggressive; they were distrustful of each other, sullen, angry. They complained that they were badly governed; that there was something rotten in the state of Britain; that things had gravely degenerated; that nothing was as it used to be; that they were drawing nearer and more near to ruin.

And now a worse thing was to happen. It was spoken of with bated breath. Fear sat on all men's hearts because of it. There was great disinclination to mention it by name distinctly and directly, as though the utterance of the word would act as a spell involving terrible consequences, and would hasten the occurrence of most dreaded events.

It was coming. All were agreed upon that head. The advance might be slow, but it was none the less sure. There might be loitering upon the journey, but still the end would certainly be attained at last. It might be this year, it might be next, no one could be positive about it, except as to the fact of its approach.

It came from the East. It had travelled along the shores of the Persian Gulf, and then spread itself over Arabia and Syria. It menaced Europe, like a tiger pausing to crouch before springing upon its prey; but as yet it had deferred its attack. Men waited, hoping, praying that it might depart, retracing its steps and leaving them unscathed. It did not spring. It crept insidiously on. There were whispers of its presence at Tiflis, Orenburg, Astrakan. It had entered Russian territory. There it remained motionless for a time; or wandered unnoticed round and round the centre of some barren waste, desperately looking for a way out. It made no sign even for years. Then suddenly a scream

of terror announced the recommencement of its march. It was passing through Southern Russia. It was at Moscow, at St. Petersburg, at Warsaw. Would it halt there? Not for long. It had entered Dantzic, Berlin, Hamburg. It was in Paris. It was in London. It had really come at last. The dreaded presence had made itself terribly felt at Rotherhithe, Wapping, the neighbourhood of the docks, Whitechapel.

Men were content to hope and pray now more moderately than of yore that it would remain in the East-end of the town, that it would not come to the West.

Lucius Grisdale, with a white face and a damp forehead, hurried to us one day to tell us, in an excited tone, that we were not to go to The Bench—not to think of going there on any account—not for the present, at any rate.

When might we go? He could not say. Soon? He hoped so. He could not be certain.

What had happened? He brought bad news?

He owned that he did not bring good news.

I entreated him to tell us the plain truth. He took my hand, and looked into my face. Then he took Nick's hand, and looked into his face.

"It will be best," he said. "There is nothing like the plain, simple, direct truth. Your father is ill—very ill, I fear. And there's great alarm in The Bench and its neighbourhood. A sort of panic prevails there. All who can are flying from the spot. The fact is there have been deaths in Lambeth and even in The Bench itself, and the cause is said to be—Asiatic Cholera."

"Is it certain?"

"It is almost certain."

"But he will recover?"

"I hope so; I trust so. But, my poor boys, it must be as God wills."

"But may we not go to him? May we not see him?"

"No, indeed not."

"Our place is near him. If he is in danger, we should be there too—his children. If he is sick, we should be by his bedside. He would wish that."

"He would not wish that. Your father has his faults. Heaven forgive me for speaking of them at such a time! We all have our faults. But he is a brave man; he knows what is right—and he does it whenever he can. That is something; that is much. 'They must not come near

me. Take care of my children, Grisdale.' And he wrung my hand. I was with him when the stroke fell. His fingers were as cold as ice; but they clutched me very tightly. 'Don't let them come.' I said you should not come."

"But you—Mr. Grisdale—you will not leave him?"

"Do not fear. I have left him but for an hour—to bring you these sad tidings—and to return to him I will do all I can for him. It is little, perhaps; but he shall want for nothing. We have the best doctors, and they will do all they may, and money shall not be spared; but—it is well to be prepared—the danger is great, very great. There were deaths in the prison last night, and again this morning. The poor prisoners," he said with a sad smile, "are obtaining their release very rapidly, whatever the Court of Chancery may think of it."

"But your own life may be endangered by your going to the prison."

"That is my affair, my friend. I know my duty; it is to help your poor father—so far as I can help him—in this his hour of sore need. Granted there is danger. I do not shrink from danger. I have been in danger before now. It makes my heart beat quicker and thrills me through and through, like grand words or noble music. I feel the better for it. I respect myself the more. Danger for a good cause is an ennobling thing. For shrinking, and paling, and turning tail, that is for curs to do. I will have none of it. All the same, I am not a braggart; I would not wish to be thought to swagger even for a moment. I say too much, no doubt. It is my weakness to give way to words. I talk so much that people think I can do nothing. But if it were certain death to me to go to the prison, I should go there, all the same, to help your father. Believe me or not, as you will."

"Indeed, I believe you, Mr. Grisdale."

"Well said, Lucius," interposed his brother Junius. "Very well said, indeed." Then, as though to overcome certain involuntary memories connected with fervid utterances, heard from time to time on the stage of Sadler's Wells, he muttered to himself, "And it's true, that's the best of it—every word's true. Lucius would do all he says."

It was terrible news. The pestilence that had appeared in our midst was even the more dreadful in that information concerning it was the less precise. It pre-

sented itself as a vague horror even to science. It was new—it was outside ordinary experience. It was an enemy that had hardly before been combated in England. Our professors of medicine had scarcely possessed themselves of a theory in regard to it. They were disagreed as to the remedies to be applied—the treatment to be adopted. General fear had pronounced the disease infectious; yet outbreaks had occurred that seemed wholly unconnected with infected districts or persons. The scourge appeared to be carried hither and thither in the air; tossed now this way and now that by the wayward winds. It was as the blight that fell on the wheat-fields; it was due to the presence of a fungus in the atmosphere. And there were predisposing causes: heat and damp, and natural feebleness of constitution; bad air and poor food, intemperance and exhaustion, from any cause, physical or mental.

My father had been ailing silently for some days. Then he had spoken of feeling weak and giddy, of his loss of appetite, of racking pains in his limbs; colour had flown from his face, his features looked shrunken; his expression was pitifully anxious; he was very tremulous; his pulse had quickened, but it was very faint; he complained now of cold and now of heat; he shivered, yet could not bear to be clothed; he suffered from a ceaseless thirst, from heartburn, from difficulty of breathing; his voice was hoarse and toneless. These symptoms were pronounced to be very grave. In a few hours he was described to be in extreme danger. A cholera ward had already been opened in the infirmary of the prison.

Mr. Grisdale left us hurriedly. He promised to return or to send us further news before the evening.

We urged him to let us wait for him outside the prison gates, but this he would on no account allow. The whole neighbourhood of The Bench was alleged to be infected. He agreed, however, that we might wait his coming on London-bridge. It was open and breezy there, and safer, therefore, than other places, and by going to meet him we should learn, so much the sooner, such tidings as he might have to bring relative to my father's state.

And if he should chance to see us from a distance would he as he approached wave his handkerchief, or hold up his hands, or give us some token that he brought good news?

He promised that he would.

Some hours we needs must wait, though, as best we might, until the time approached for going to the bridge to meet our kind, good friend. It was weary work wandering about our wretched empty house. We could not speak to each other. We could but have communicated the deadly fear that oppressed us; we had no hopes to share. I know at least that, for my own part, my fear would not let me hope. I had judged from Mr. Grisdale's words and manner that my father was dying, that he was doomed beyond the remotest chance of rescue.

There came a loud knocking at the door.

Nick started. I almost screamed. I was reduced to such a state of nervous tension and exhaustion.

A sort of gust of life, young and bright, seemed to enter the house.

It was Doris!

She was laughing, crying, talking all at once. She kissed us fondly again and again. We stood twined together, a close, fond group. I had never seen her look so beautiful, although her dress was tumbled, her hair tangled, and her cheeks stained with tears.

"I could bear it no longer," she said, "and so I ran away. Yes, ran away, there's no other word for it. I had money enough for my fare by the York-house coach. I have so wanted to hear news of you all. And I have been so frightened because of not hearing from you; and I have grown sick, oh so sick! of my aunts, and they have grown tired of me, and so cross, there is no bearing them; and they have lost a great deal of their money, or they fear to lose it. I'm sure I don't understand it all. But Aunt Jane is not expected to live much longer; and if she dies her income will cease, and Aunt Martha will feel herself very much poorer. They have always put their money together, it seems; and Aunt Martha says she must live in a very different way—in a poorer and much more pinched and shabby way—if Aunt Jane is to be taken from us. And then I felt that I was a tax upon them. They did not mean me to feel that; but I did feel it. And then there was this mystery and trouble about papa. So that altogether I was most wretched, and I determined that I could and would bear it no longer. I spoke to my aunts about it. But they could not understand me, or they would not; and they thought it mere foolishness, and fancifulness, and extravagance. They

did not sympathise with me. What did it matter about papa? Of what use could I be? Well, very little; but it did matter all the same. And so—and so I'm here," she ended abruptly, and kissed us afresh.

"My dear Nick! My dear Buppy! How nice it is to be with you again! What an age it is since I left you! And how shabby you are; and white; and thin; and forlorn! What rusty old clothes! And how wretched, and neglected, and slovenly, and dirty the house looks! But you *did* tell me about poor Norah, didn't you? And now about papa. Tell me, tell me, or I shall cry with impatience and vexation. Where is he? What has happened? Something sad, and distressing, and painful I can see by your looks, I can feel by your manner. Speak to me, Nick. Speak to me, Buppy. Why don't you speak to me? Don't you see that your silence is torture to me?" Her voice was hysterically shrill and quavering. She stamped her foot petulantly.

Then we told her all.

"Hold my hands, both of you. How sad! how horrible! It makes me faint and sick to hear of it, to think of it. Did I come up to London for this? But it's as well I came. I'm very, very glad I came. Oh my poor dear papa! I've loved him so. I love him so. But why are we standing here? We must go to him, Buppy, at once—at once. He must want to see us. He must see us. Don't you know that he loves us dearly? that he has always loved us? and been so fond of us, and so proud—though, perhaps, there wasn't really so much for him to be proud of. We must go to him, at all costs, at all hazards, and at once."

I told her of our understanding with Mr. Grisdale.

"Let us go at once; the sooner the better. I've some money left. Call a coach, Nick. We must drive to London-bridge as fast as we can."

Fast as we drove we found that Mr. Grisdale had arrived there before us. He was white as a sheet. And he held his hands close to his side. So much I could see even from many yards' distance.

"You understand what has happened?"

We could but look at him with scared, beseeching eyes.

"All is over."

"He is dead?"

"He died but a few minutes after my return. He seemed wasted away. He did

not suffer. He pressed my hand ever so faintly. I stooped down. He was speaking, but his voice was so weak I could not distinguish his words. Then he made a great effort to be articulate. It was like one of his elocutionary lessons, poor, dear man! 'Tell them to be good children,' he said; 'tell them to be good children. God bless you, Grisdale. God bless you all.' And then the end came."

HOW TO FURNISH.

WHEN some persons are about to marry, have hunted out a house to marry into, and are left with the duty before them of filling the house with furniture, there comes a time, an accomplished authoress tells us, in a new little book she has written,* when they "haven't an idea of what to do," when "their knowledge is nil," when they derive much help from "talking it over." "Gentlefolks are these," the authoress says, "all the poorer in that they know what's what, but cannot compass it;" they fall "an easy prey to well-meaning friends;" they are plied with "advice, and so-called help," with the result that they reach a "crude, unreasonable compound—a *mêlée* of incongruous and conflicting advice—ending in bitter regret and disgust." Alas! it is sad. It is even worse—it is piteous.

But—and renovated cheerfulness comes with the assurance—a remedy has been found for every item in this dolorous, housewifely inventory. The accomplished authoress of *Tables and Chairs* undertakes, "as far as in her lies, and according to the lights vouchsafed unto her," to render a house "comfortable and pretty-furnished, at as small a cost as is compatible with everything therein being thoroughly gentlemanlike and good of its kind." Further, this cost being five hundred and forty-two pounds four shillings, the lady promises that, "by setting to work in a foresightful and orderly manner," the sum shall "be practically made to do the work of about eight hundred pounds;" and this, from no profession of being "artistic, or economic, or any 'ie' in particular," but simply, "because she has the reader's interest at heart, and has herself passed through similar phases." Now, by these carefully-constructed sentences, these

* *Tables and Chairs: a Practical Guide to Economical Furnishing.* By the Author of "How to Dress on Fifteen Pounds a Year."

original adjectives, these playful flights of a well-trained fancy, the lady proves her qualifications for the task she has set herself. She carries her hearers with her, too. For instance, how enthusiastic everybody must become, at the promise that everything in the pretty-furnished house shall be gentlemanlike! Defining this estimable quality, it is found to mean, in a stair-carpet, "that the border should be of a darker shade of the same, thinking that, in a small house"—let the reservation be noted—"it is more gentlemanlike;" it is found to mean, in white linen table-cloths, that they should be of "small, neat patterns, checks, or spots," these being "by far the most gentlemanlike on a small, or indeed, on any table." Chintz curtains, also, can have masculine characteristics. For a library, or smoking-room, chintzes are to be chosen of a "manly pattern;" the same being set down as "something in stripes, in which red predominates;" and reference is likewise made to a "ladylike room," in which there might be a ladylike teapot, a ladylike gas bracket, ladylike chair-covers. "Nothing nowadays looks so nice and ladylike, or is so economical, as well-fitting loose covers," which may, by-the-way, be made of manly chintz; in gas-brackets, "have nothing made of ormolu scroll-work, both heavy and vulgar, the plain bright brass will look infinitely more ladylike;" in teapots, "be satisfied with a Rockingham, for at least it is unpretending, and in this has the principal element of ladylikeness."

Now, is it possible, taking these examples as a base on which to found a judgment, that the authoress of *Tables and Chairs* has no clear notions of what words mean? She must be confused, it is to be feared, in some way, for she talks of a grate "of a rather ecclesiastical nature;" of "readers afflicted with rampant quirkdom;" of "arranging bookcases very judgmatically;" of paper of "an unvexations pattern;" of "inking the threadbareness" of a carpet; of the "dis-sight," coming from loose tiles; of common deal that "dinges with the slightest knock;" of a "gasalier in possession being a caution of hideousness;" of cutting leathers with a knife for fear "you may haply cut the wood as well;" of a bedroom sofa being "usable" as a bed; of the reasons for turning a back-room into a schoolroom, bedroom, study, or boudoir, being reasons that are "suppositious." Words are of importance to the lady, too. "I suppose we must not

use the word 'chic,'" she cries, quite out of heart about it, "though Heaven knows why not!" This is when she says that "bell-pulls would not look otherwise than nice if backed, as it were, with a velvet rim;" and if she is under the impression that "chic" would express this "niceness" better, it is a pity she denies herself the soft indulgence.

"Don't," cries the lady, with touching eloquence, still discoursing of bell-pulls (which innocent little articles, she declares, "always seem to be marked out and given over to vulgarity")—"don't have horrid china things with ormolu flourishes for the handles, when with very little trouble your carpenter will turn, or get turned for you, simple ones of ebony, oak, or other wood, to accord with the painting of the room; I assure you these will look as well again, nor must you be discouraged when he (the carpenter) tells you that what you wish is an impossibility; he, speaking generically, always says that to any suggestion out of the common!"

Without dwelling further upon eccentricities of style and construction (of which the authoress of *Tables and Chairs* seems blandly and complacently unconscious), it is, perhaps, more to the point to inquire whether the lady, on her own ground, is what she says it is good for a cook to be—"a dependable person." Surely the region of furniture is a domain over which a lady might, and ought to, reign supreme. To choose a new carpet, to replace the old curtains, to buy fresh towels, dusters, cups and saucers, pails, brushes, bedding, ornaments, elegancies, has ever been an English lady's especial department and "vocation" (if it must be); and in spite of the modern clamour that these duties do not satisfy women, that women are too frivolous, or too "strong," to fulfil them, it must be maintained, here, that by women they are fulfilled, and that from a woman can be the best advice upon them come. Turning, then, in *Tables and Chairs*, to the item, "Drawing-room curtains" ("my reader and I," says the authoress, "being of the feminine gender, the drawing-room naturally claims the first place in our deliberations"), what is set down as being perfectly precise and established?

First, that the curtains should be four yards and a half long; secondly, that they should contain a breadth and a half of the material chosen; thirdly, that this material should cost four shillings and sixpence a

yard, and the lining, to go throughout, eighteenpence, making six shillings together; fourthly, that, as each window would want two curtains, thirteen yards and a half of the material would be requisite to make a pair. Now, these are points that can pass under debased and masculine eyes just as they are. A little haze may exist over the technicality "a breadth and a half." When it is explained, though, that it is precisely as if A, B, C were equal lengths of stuff, and as if C were split into two, for one half of it to be added on to A, and the other half of it to be added on to B, this will bring instant comprehension, and there will be no cause for further demurrer or complaint. The facts may be true, or may be not true; it is immaterial; the only point is, that there they stand. But, when the gifted authoress of *Tables and Chairs* announces that thirteen yards and a half of material at four shillings and sixpence, together with thirteen yards and a half of lining, at about one shilling and sixpence per yard, can be bought for two pounds ten, or, in her own words, makes "the price of a pair of curtains, for a window of an ordinary width and height, about fifty shillings," arithmetic confutes her, whether the brain directing it be masculine or feminine, and if she will take a slate and a pencil and a Penny Calculation Table, she will see that for fifty she should have written eighty-one.

Turn, too, to the item linen sheets.

"Suppose," says the lady, with cheery familiarity, "the bed to be three feet six inches, the width of sheeting required would be eighty inches, or about six quarters: this—"

Here there is evidently another slip. Eighty inches are equivalent to about six quarters—of what? Of a yard, of course. A yard is thirty-six inches; a quarter of a yard is nine inches; six nines, i.e. what the lady sets down as eighty—are generally found to be fifty-four!

"This will leave plenty on either side for tucking in."

It is true. If a lady (or a gentleman) will hang a sheet that is eighty inches wide, across a bed that is three feet six inches, or forty-two inches wide, she (or he) will find that there is plenty for tucking in. In fact, a dependable person, possessing a judgmatical mind, might think that some of the pall-like drapery, "on either side," could be dispensed with; seeing, especially, that width has to be paid for, and that the

price of the foot or so of wasted material might just as well be in the dependable person's pocket. Going on, there is more.

"The length is to be the same as those for the large bed," set forth as four yards. "As these sheets will not be in continual use, you may allow about four shillings per yard, and two pairs will suffice."

In other words, four sheets are to be bought; each sheet is to be four yards long; each yard is to cost four shillings. It is quite clear; quite comprehensible. It is utterly wrong that linen sheets, even of the wasteful width of eighty inches for a three-feet-six-inches bed, need cost four shillings a yard; a glance at any upholsterer's catalogue (an article a good housewife should always have by her), would show that "stout Barnsley," to measure eighty-one inches, can be bought for two shillings and fourpence-halfpenny, and "fine Barnsley," the same width, for two shillings and ninepence. It is also open to question whether it is necessary, or usual, for poor gentlefolks, who know what's what but cannot compass it, to have linen for their sheets at all; seeing that linen is dear, and that medical men are much opposed to it. But there shall be waiving of all that, and the attention shall be fixed solely on four anythings, of four yards long, at four shillings for each yard of them. Let it be calculated. Four fours are sixteen; sixteen yards, at four shillings a yard, come to three pounds four shillings. And what is it put down at in *Tables and Chairs*? Gravely and bravely, one pound twelve shillings and sixpence. Reckonings of this sort can scarcely be called dependable.

Turn, next, to the item, chimney-glass, or, as the lady under review prefers to call it, to the item mirror. "As large a plate as you require (about seventy-two inches by fifty-six inches), framed simply, square with the chimney-piece, rounded at the top, and nearly touching the ceiling, would be about twenty pounds." Then, drawing-room arm-chairs are to be four pounds ten shillings a piece; a sofa is to be nine pounds; a fender, three pounds ten shillings; a sideboard, twelve pounds; a dinner-service, three pounds ten shillings; bedroom chairs, seven shillings and sixpence each; a wooden pail, five shillings; a scrubbing-brush, three shillings and sixpence; a bath-can, one pound five shillings; an egg-whisk, eight shillings; a chopper,

half-a-crown; a tin for tea, three shillings; three white bowls, nine shillings; a set of skewers, a shilling—these examples being enough. The prices are as much too large (allowing for moderate goods, the sort likely to be purchased by persons of moderate means) as the prices previously quoted were twisted into being too little. A far lower genius than a foresightful housewife could detect this, and they have only to be mentioned to prove the random manner, either way, in which figures have been put down.

It is equally curious to note the general method of the authoress of *Tables and Chairs*. The house she undertakes to furnish in a gentlemanlike manner, is to be of very moderate size, it is only to have ten or twelve rooms in it, it is to be "of the most unmitigated town-type—nothing more common or unpromising; the front-room with two smallish windows, or perhaps, one large one; in the back-room, a small one, with probably a dreary outlook;" yet the occupants are somehow to have such substantial means, that they are to keep three women-servants and a man. The man is to have a press-bed in his pantry, costing two pounds ten shillings, though how there is to be room in a small house for a pantry fit for a sleeping-place, does not appear; he is to have fifty pounds' worth of plate to clean, an eight-shilling tub to wash it in, four plate brushes, three plate leathers, a shilling corkscrew, and a dozen glass cloths, costing nine shillings; for all of which—seeing that "for breakfast you will not want more than six cups and saucers, indeed, you will never probably require so many"—the establishment is on a scale too modest. Again: "There is no such hurry for a dessert-service, as there is for dinner-china." Yet dinner-parties, without doubt, are in the lady's head, because there is to be so much glass for the man-servant to wash with his nine-shilling glass cloths: the inventory says, a claret jug, three decanters, ten claret glasses, "the high horn-shaped ones," ten of "the usual large wine-glass kind for after-dinner claret," ten ports, ten sherries, and ten finger-glasses. In the visitor's bedroom, too, there is to be a bookcase, with books constantly changed "to suit the tastes of the occupant for the time being, so as not to shock, but to conciliate;" there is to be an elaborate writing-table, holding "a large ink-bottle, not the usual shabby wedding-present, which is gene-

rally consigned to the spare-room, as being too hopelessly inconvenient for any one to use; pen and paper, of course, and don't forget—but I fear it is not a case of forgetting—a few postage-stamps, and a packet of halfpenny cards; hardly more than a shilling's worth, all said; don't grudge it; and oh, let not my reader be angry, or in any way vexed—a *Postal Guide* and a *Whitaker* would be—well, well, I will not go on; it is aggravating to spend a whole half-crown on your best friend, I own." Yet, as a contrast to this lavish style of arrangement, there is to be something very wonderful done with a Colman's shilling mustard-barrel, a gimlet, three strong little casters, and some pieces of thick wool cord, with the end of the surprising piece of economy making "an excellent seat" for the treasured friend, at a cost "next to nothing." As it is possible, also, that the occupier of this interesting bedroom may be of that terrible sex, the male, "it would be wise to provide a very thick and large bath-blanket, to save the ceiling below in case of an inundation; for they—i.e. men—are not inapt to sit on the edge of the bath, and tip over the contents;" the comment upon which shall be that if they—i.e. men—were to sit on the edge of the Colman's shilling mustard barrel, three casters and all, they would be very likely to tip that over, and would be perfectly sure, if they did, to have much laughter and wonderment at the complicated and absurd contrivance. The thought might come to them—i.e. men—too, that a little consistency in expenditure would be wholesome; and that though shift-making is worthy of every admiration, it is of no service whatever if, with the other hand, prices are given for furniture twice as much as other people give; and if expenses, quite out of place for poor gentlefolks of very moderate means, are heedlessly incurred.

But does the authoress of *Tables and Chairs* display any knowledge at all of housekeeping, or the high and varied duties of a housewife, in her little book? Or, is her house very like the house that Jack built—built on paper at the beginning, and intended for nothing more substantial to the very end? These questions are put, because, in addition to what has been already quoted, it is written: "Plain-scrubbed boards are, in theory, very nice;" but, in London, the oftener they are washed the blacker they become,

on account of the smuts settling on them before they are dry ;" and also because of the singularly useful advice given by our authoress, that a bath should be low enough to be pushed under the bed, for the reason that a bath with a back "rolls about on its side, and slips down with a bang like a gong in the middle of the night ;" in furtherance of which lofty idea there is the sage reflection, "ironmongers are an impracticable race. I wonder, do they become ironmongers because they are so, or are so because they become ironmongers ?" These questions are put, also, because it is written, soberly, seriously, that young housekeepers, with their slender means, with their more slender knowledge, are to entirely re-paper and re-paint their house on going into it ; are to put in new drawing-room windows ; are to entirely remove the folding-doors between the back and front drawing-rooms, with the partition that holds the doors, the second fire-place, and the second side-door ; are to put a new grate and new marble mantelshelf to the front, the marble to cost seventeen pounds ; are to rest assured that three pieces of paper (with a dado) will paper the drawing-rooms ; are to have "the old papers sopped off and consigned to their proper place"—not the paper-hanger's rubbish-cart, but—"the dust-hole ;" are to put in a new kitchen-range—"it will not cost less than twenty pounds by the time it is fixed," says the lady, as if, even if it cost a quarter of twenty pounds, any young housekeeper of small means had a right to make such an outlay ; because it says, for the last instance that shall be given, that few people can go upstairs without "pawing the walls," and that, in this drawing-room of a small ten or twelve roomed house, "of the most unmitigated town-type," space is to be found for an oval table, forty-eight inches by thirty, for a round table a little smaller, for "one or two odds and ends of tea-tables," for a writing-table "for the general public," for a davenport or esri-toire "for your own especial use," for a whatnot or two-tiered table to hold the "usual litter that, do what one will, collects daily," and for "a small turnstile-table for reference-books—Bradshaw, Postal Guide, &c., which may be looked upon as an appendage to the writing-table, and should stand near it."

Well may the lady say, at the close of her little book, that she hopes it will "be of use to those more ignorant and with

less experience than herself." It was the only wish left to her ; for she may be quite assured it will be of no use whatever to anybody else.

PICTURES ON THE PANES.

How many pictures are there here,
Upon the frozen panes this morn !
There is a river, broad and clear,
And silver ships are on it borne.
And further on the palace domes
Of some bright elin city shine ;
And there are many stately homes
Of merchants rich in wheat and wine.
Instead of coloured-flow'rs of scent,
The plants with diamonds are arrayed ;
And trees with golden fruit are bent
O'er garden-walls of jewels made.
And, far away, the fair clouds kiss
The snowy tops of tor and hill.
Was ever picture like to this ?
Here is a real running rill !
And now the city, struck with fire,
Is changed into a burning plain.
Oh ! what has made this mischief dire ?
It is the sun upon the pane.
The hills themselves with fire are bound ;
They slip, and on the city fall,
And crush it down into the ground,
And there is ruin over all !
And now no palaces appear ;
There is no city red with flame ;
Not anything of it is here,
But water on the window-frame.
The meadows that indeed I see,
In winter winds their joys have lost ;
But in the springtime they will be
Fairer than pictures in the frost.

AT SEA WITH THE DOCTOR.

It was a rough night on the Atlantic, and the Cunarder was plunging her way gallantly, but with difficulty, through the foaming waves. The passengers had gathered in the warm and well-lighted saloon, and were engaged in a lively discussion of an international character. A few pallid faces, upturned upon the red sofa cushions, bore evidence to the might of Neptune, who had suddenly asserted his power, after allowing the sea for many days to remain as placid as a mountain lake. The stewards had finished their labours, and were perched upon little stools near the pantry, keeping themselves in position by holding on to ropes, and improving their minds by the perusal of stray copies of the Ledger and Lloyd's Newspaper. Above, the boatswain's shrill and cheery whistle was now and then heard ; and swiftly after it had ceased came the tramp of the feet of hurrying sailors. The captain came down for a moment, to chat with the purser and

perhaps to dry his clothes, which were covered with spray. As the genial commander entered the tiny cabin in which that important functionary, the purser, was at that moment regaling himself with tea, toast, and ham, the doctor followed him. He closed the door, and the purser was about to make a jovial remark, when the doctor said, gravely, to the captain:

"Excuse me, sir, for troubling you, but I came to tell you that that baby is dead."

There was a touch of tenderness and pity in the doctor's voice as he spoke, announcing an occurrence only too common at sea. Perhaps he was thinking of his own fair-haired little ones in their pleasant English home; perhaps of the many babes he had seen committed to the bosom of the vasty deep, while the beautiful burial service was read above them, and the rough sailors and sympathetic travellers stood round about with tear-stained faces. The captain's voice was gentle as he turned and answered:

"Well, let the service be to-morrow morning at ten o'clock. I will read."

"The poor mother is quite wild with her sorrow," said the doctor. "But the rough folks near her are very good to her in her trouble. There was no saving the little thing; pneumonia did it; and when that lays its frosty hand on a child, three years old, at sea, there is no help. The baby was long past aid when I was summoned. 'This is the third child I have lost on the journey' (a long one from some point west), said the mother, to me; 'and God knows will we get them other two home to Ireland.'"

"What a sad case!" said I, from my corner on the purser's sofa.

"Oh! but that is nothing to what I have seen at sea! A few years since, while making a voyage to England in another boat, a mother, in the steerage, sent for me, and when I came, implored me on her knees to save her two children from the perils of diphtheria, with which they seemed threatened. 'Oh, doctor!' she said, sobbing as if her heart would break, 'diphtheria has robbed me of every near relative I have in the world except these two children. My husband and three of my babes died with it; and now it has come again.' Well, sir, bless my heart! I worked over those children as I have rarely worked before or since. But diphtheria had certainly declared itself on board; although I took the greatest precautions, one of the children died before

reaching port, and the other in an hotel in Liverpool. The mother resigned herself solemnly to her great grief. She said that when they were taken ill, she knew they would not recover."

The purser finished his supper, laid down his fork, which immediately began to chase the knife and the hollow blue plate up and down the table, as if determined, like a vicious dog at a horse's head, to worry them into some expression of annoyance. "Doctor," he said, reflectively, "do you remember the Denver man?"

"Shall I forget him, as long as I live, you mean?" rejoined the doctor. "He was the coolest man I ever saw on a death-bed on an ocean steamer. The second night out from New York, I was called to his cabin. He lay in his berth, this tall, gaunt Westerner, looking already like a corpse. As I came in, he said, cheerily:

"'Doctor, it looks like I'd made a mistake. I reckon I ought not to have come to sea just now, but I did kind o'think my strength 'd hold out to get me to Italy, and there I—'

"I knelt down at his side, and carefully examined him. I told him that had he asked my advice before coming, I should certainly have forbidden him to undertake the journey. He smiled feebly, and said, 'I knew ye would, and that's the reason I didn't ask ye. Wife 'n I made that up between us—didn't we, wife?—though I reckon she 'lowed I'd better stayed at home.' Death had already set his mark on the man's brow. I told him as gently as I could that I feared for the worst, but, that he might succeed in weathering the voyage. He interrupted me, saying, 'That's all right, doctor. Don't you worry none about me. Ef I die, just you have 'em chuck me overboard, and don't make any effort to get me to shore. I ain't afraid on't, an' my wife's prepar'd to see me go.'

"His wife, seated on the cabin sofa, buried her face in her hands a moment, but when she looked up again, she was resigned. As I went out, he repeated, 'Mind, now, what I tell ye, and just let 'em dump me right into the water. What difference does it make where a man's buried?' He died three days after this, and was of course buried at sea. Two days after his burial, his widow gave birth to a child. My heart went out to this desolate woman, about to be landed on a foreign shore with a new-born babe in her arms. 'Madam, I said, your admirable

courage is more than enough to awaken anyone's warmest sympathies. Can we not assist you in some manner?' What do you think she answered? She said, 'Doctor, don't mind me, I've seen a heap o' trouble, 'n I'm used to it. The last child I bore, before this one, I was in a flat boat, floating down the Upper Missouri river. The Indians was firin' at us from both sides o' the stream, 'n my husband was fightin' 'em from the boat. We've seen powerful hard times, but I don't feel broke up yet. Thank God, I've got money enough to keep me goin' a while, 'n I reckon I'll have to stay in England some, so's to let this little one get big enough ter go back again.' She and her babe arrived safely in port, and I never saw them more."

"Plucky folks," said the purser. "But they're not all like that."

"More's the pity," said the doctor. "Some people get frightened at nothing at all. There was once an old French lady crossing with me, returning from a visit she had made to relatives in France. On the way home, the poor old soul insisted that I should attend her, as she was in mortal extremity. I gave her my attention; but could discover no alarming symptoms, except a disordered liver, and a sea-sick imagination. I told her so, hoping to cure her by ridicule; but she was thoroughly frightened, and insisted upon making her will. Now this was grave; and, of course, there was no denying her. Accordingly I looked about me for a witness, and I found a model one in the person of a well-known American general. When I first introduced him to my patient, who represented herself as entering upon her last moments, he was duly impressed with the solemnity of the occasion; but after he had conversed with her for a moment or two a light began to break upon his mind, and the first opportunity that he had he whispered to me, cautiously:

"Is she really in great danger?"

"Not the least in the world," I answered, emphatically; and he found it difficult to keep his face straight as he witnessed the instrument. The old lady thanked him tearfully; but she tore up the will before she left the steamer.

"It is sometimes very hard to distinguish between real and simulated distress on shipboard," continued the doctor, after a moment's pause. "Steerage passengers often feign sickness in the hopes of procuring liquor, to the use of which they

have been accustomed on shore, and which they are compelled to do without at sea. I had a case in point only yesterday. While you were at tea in the saloon, a man from the steerage came to my window, and tapped. I looked out, and saw as hearty and healthy a man as ever left New York harbour. He began a long series of complaints; one would have imagined that every disease in the calendar of human ailments had seized upon him at once. But there was not a symptom about him which agreed with his statements. I said, 'You need no medicine; have you not had proper food in the steerage? There are arrow-root, and gruel, and plain vegetables, if your stomach refuses more substantial food.' There was nothing the matter with the food. What then? At last I understood him. 'Perhaps a glass of brandy would be the appropriate remedy for all your evils?' I suggested this with a little malice I confess. 'That's it indade, sor!' he said, triumphantly. 'Well, then, you'll not get it on this boat,' I told him; 'and don't venture to come troubling me again, unless you are really ill.'

"Sometimes a steerage passenger, either from ignorance or false shame, will not ask for the doctor's services when he needs them. I am compelled to make a round of inspection to be sure that I overlook no patient. On this very voyage I have discovered a man with a broken head. He never would have mentioned his hurt to me; but the chances are that he would have died on the journey. He says he received the wound in a brawl, the night before sailing, but he does not remember where. The skull was in a terrible condition when I first examined it. It is of little use to ask these people how and when they were hurt; I have given up any attempts to get at the truth, since one of our sailors was once brought to me drenched with blood, his head beaten out of shape, and his teeth scattered to the four winds. As I was dressing his wounds, I bent down and asked him:

"My poor fellow, where did you get this?"

"His answer was instantaneous. 'At a christenin', sur!' Had I asked him anew, he would have told me something else quite as unlikely."

At this point, the captain donning the great-coat, which he had laid aside for a few minutes as he listened to the doctor's reminiscences, went on deck once more. The purser and the surgeon then lit their

long pipes, and fell into reflective moods. At last the doctor resumed his stories, as if he had been evolving memories from the clouds of smoke drifting around him.

"When there are one hundred and fifty or two hundred first-class passengers on one of those ocean steamers," he observed, "it is not unusual to find among them some one suffering from the effects of a prolonged debauch in drink. The freaks of these people are simply incomprehensible. Now and then a man is observed to act strangely for a day or two, but is not considered dangerous, until he suddenly jumps into the sea, and is half a mile astern before the boats can be lowered. If he jumps overboard at night, of course there is no hope for him. Some years ago a young Englishman of good family was crossing with us, and, as he had shown signs of delirium tremens, he was accompanied by a medical attendant. This person insisted that his charge was not insane, and, above all, would not attempt his own life. I thought that my experience justified a contrary conclusion, and I insisted that the young man should be confined to his room; that his razors and all sharp utensils should be taken away from him; and that his state-room should have mattresses placed against the walls, so as to form a kind of padded cell. These precautions were taken, but they were in vain, because of the foolishness of the attendant. That insufferably stupid person persisted that it was an outrage to lock his charge up, and, therefore, went on deck one morning, after unlocking the delirious man's state-room. The unfortunate attendant had hardly gone as far as the funnel in his morning promenade, when he heard a rustle behind him, and was horrified to see his insane charge spring upon the rail, shouting, 'Good-bye, old boy!' and from thence plunge into the foaming water. All efforts to save the man were vain."

"It was on that occasion," said the purser, "that we saw a good illustration of one of the cardinal points of the American character—coolness. There was a tall, lean, cadaverous-looking down-Easter among the passengers on deck, when the man jumped into the water. Of course the alarm, 'Man overboard!' was sounded, and it seemed as if sailors never before had lowered boats so quickly. Everyone on deck was livid with excitement, except the long, lean American, who held his watch in his hand and said, reflectively:

"'Good for Cunard! First boat touched water three minutes after call was sounded.'"

"I remember a case," said the doctor, "in which great presence of mind, on the part of a person from whom one would hardly have expected it, saved a woman's life at sea. We left Liverpool with a very large company of passengers, among whom was a troupe of actresses, destined to shine in a burlesque in one of the New York theatres. We had been on the ocean less than twenty-four hours, when one of these women, a girl in her twentieth year, was seized with a sudden madness, and I was called upon to prescribe for the quieting of her overtaxed nerves. Her senses apparently returned, and her companions had sufficient confidence in her cure to relax their vigilance. As soon as she was again the mistress of her own movements, she began to make plans for self-destruction. Very early one stormy morning she rose, dressed herself in an extravagant stage costume, and, making her way to the deck, asked the first gentleman whom she encountered, which boat she should get into. 'Make haste!' she cried, 'the ship is sinking, and there is not a moment to lose.' In her crazed anxiety she rushed past him, and would undoubtedly have sprung into the water, had he not acted with a sudden resolution. He was a quiet merchant from an obscure English town, and his amazement, at seeing this goddess of burlesque appear on the sea-washed decks, was unbounded. But as soon as she spoke, he perceived the truth, and, grasping her firmly by the wrist, he said: 'The boat for you will be launched from the lower deck. See, I have the same number!' pointing to one of the buttons of his overcoat; and he led her, smiling and unresisting, below, where he delivered her into the purser's care. Then I was sent for, and we succeeded in protecting her against herself during the remainder of the voyage.

"On another occasion, I was sent for by a handsome, athletic fellow, who assured me that he was haunted by a tall man in a blue cap. This mysterious stranger entered his state-room at all hours of the night, committed depredations, was guilty of unseemly violence, and would not be persuaded to behave himself. 'I have remonstrated with him,' said the passenger, pointing to a pile of broken crockery and to torn and ruined bed-linen; 'but it's no use.' I at once saw that this was another

case of delirium tremens, and, as my patient appeared to be a person of education and refinement, I accused him directly of debauchery, and warned him of its terrible consequences. He appeared mildly indignant, insisted that everything should be visited upon the head of the man in the blue cap, and even begged me, with tears in his eyes, to remain and witness the entry and exit of the capricious stranger. Under the circumstances, I felt justified in having all the fragile articles which remained unbroken removed, in barricading the walls with mattresses, and in ordering the steward to keep the state-room door locked at night. Next morning, the steward came to me to announce that, the passenger had again torn up everything which his strength was capable of destroying. I repaired to the state-room, and found my patient more indignant even than on the previous day, at the conduct of the wicked man in the blue cap. I therefore pretended to hold a consultation with the steward, and then said: 'I am assured that there is no man in a blue cap on board, and I am convinced that you destroy these things yourself. It is therefore my duty to inform you that, if you do it once more, I shall notify it to the captain, and he will have you put in irons.' The passenger protested that he was ill-used; begged that his room might be changed, and bitterly denounced the blue-capped invader. I felt that my threats would be of some avail, however, and so gave the passenger one more night of grace, administering to him, meantime, quieting medicines. What was my surprise, when the steward, a reserved and decorous Londoner, burst into my room, with his eyes protruding from their sockets, and exclaiming in a horrified voice: 'Well, I ham blowed if he 'asn't gone and cut up awful again!' I asked the captain to come down with me, and to have irons brought, hoping to frighten the man thoroughly. But he made the most piteous complaints to the captain, alleging that he was the victim of a conspiracy, that the man in the blue cap was purposely sent to torment him, and that he could endure it no longer. It was evidently useless to deal harshly with such a man; so we contented ourselves with keeping a close watch upon him until we arrived in port, and he expressed his gratitude to us long afterwards.

"Less terrible, perhaps, were the experiences of an unlucky Scotchman, making

his first voyage to America. He was inclined to be hilarious during the first day out, and the weather being rather rough, the captain asked him how he felt. 'Eh, mon! it's just Paradise,' was his answer, in that broadly-accented dialect, which always provokes a smile from those to whom it is not natural. 'They mak' a thing below thot they call a cock-tail, and it's e'en just the most winsome thing that I ever tipped down my thrapple.' A few hours afterwards, the captain espied the brave Scot lying beside the funnel, an abject heap of wrappers, and suffering horribly from sea-sickness. 'How is it with you now, my friend?' he inquired. 'Eh, captain, mon, I'd gi'e ye the best five-pun' note I ever handled, if ye could clap me into Paisley jail!' His pangs were evidently as great as those of the man who, in describing his sensations in sea-sickness, said that, for the first hour he feared he should die, and the second, he feared that he shouldn't!"

The duties of steamship doctors are far more onerous than are generally supposed. Upon these zealous and pains-taking officials fall a hundred petty cares, of which the passengers know nothing. The ventilation and disinfecting of the ship is all carried on under the doctor's directions; and, in rough weather, he is sometimes obliged to issue formal orders to steerage passengers to leave their poorly-lighted bunks below, and to come up into the keen air and the dashing spray. In rare cases, force has actually to be employed to make people leave their beds; there are ominous threatenings and gruntings, but returning health makes the recalcitrant patients ashamed of their obstinacy. The saloon passengers are now and then more refractory than the humbler denizens of the steerage. The writer of this article, were he brought to confession, would be obliged to admit that he once passed three days in his berth, with no refreshment save a raw onion and one of Edmond About's novels; and absolutely refused to be comforted. The doctor and the purser too, together share the burden of the innumerable questions hurled at the captain by the passengers. Ten thousand demands concerning everything, from the science of navigation to the prospects of safe arrival, are heaped upon this unusually good-natured trio of officials, every one of whom has probably been asked each question at least a hundred times before. Even when the passage from port to port

is smooth, there is enough for a conscientious medical man to do; but when the rough gales swoop down the Atlantic, the labour is quite fatiguing.

"In the midst of a terrible cyclone some years ago," said our doctor, "when the good ship literally stood on her beam-ends, and when it seemed as if she would be swept away into the abyss, I suddenly felt the qualms of sea-sickness creeping over me. It was the first time that they had visited me for half a generation, but they were none the less terrible, and I felt like crawling into my room, and resigning myself to them. Just as I was about to do this, I received the intelligence that a sailor in the fore-castle had one of his legs broken, and I was compelled to go to him, and to summon all my skill for a difficult case of surgical practice. Scarcely had I finished this exhausting work, when another sailor on deck was nearly killed, and I had to spend the remainder of the day over him. Before I had completed the second operation, I had quite forgotten my own illness."

Sometimes, despite the elaborate precautions taken by the agents of steamship companies in shipping passengers, the doctor awakens, after the voyage is begun, to the horrible consciousness that he is face to face with an infectious disease, which may spread throughout the ship, and result in destroying the reputation of the line. He sets to work to isolate the people who are ill. If small-pox be the disorder, he persuades every one except the sick, that it is nothing of the kind, and in the meantime takes the most extraordinary pains to get the sufferers out of sight. He extemporises a hospital, and places a trusty attendant in charge; he issues orders that no cabin passengers shall be allowed to visit the steerage, and that no occupant of the steerage shall appear on the saloon decks. He deluges every hole and corner with disinfectants, and when asked by passengers why it is done, responds that "one can never be too prudent at sea." If a patient dies of small-pox, he is buried at midnight, or at an hour in the morning when it is believed that all the passengers are sleeping profoundly.

"Many years ago," said our doctor, "we had a very inquisitive passenger, who succeeded in discovering that small-pox had broken out in the steerage. He was wise enough not to say anything about it to the other cabin passengers; but he stole

up one midnight to see us bury a poor man who had died during the afternoon. Two days afterwards we arrived in port, the passenger went on shore, and in a fortnight died from small-pox. I have no doubt that the contagion was communicated from the clothes in which the unfortunate victim from the steerage was dressed, when he was thrown into the sea."

"Do you believe that some steamships are luckier than others, doctor?" asked the purser, who disliked the boat in which we were crossing, and longed to get back to his pet ship.

"Not exactly," was the answer; "but some ships have continuous runs of bad luck. There is one boat (I'll not mention the name) than which there is none stancher or more seaworthy on the Atlantic; yet it is a terror to me to be compelled to sail in her. From beginning to end of the voyage there is an uninterrupted chapter of accidents. The last time that I crossed in that unhappy craft, there was an awful storm, in which the wheel-house, part of the captain's room, and one or two boats, were carried away; a cabin passenger broke a finger, and a steerage passenger broke a leg; the sailors required constant attendance, and a poor little girl fell down the hatchway, and was killed, the day we arrived in port. I shun the vessel as I would the plague."

As the doctor said these words, a tremendous sea smote our good ship with such force, that it threw us quite off from the sofa. "There's a nest of old women in the steerage that I must look after before I venture to retire," the doctor murmured, as he picked himself up, "and so I will bid you good-night."

THE POOR GENTLEWOMEN OF ST. CLEMENT'S.

IN SIX PARTS. PART V.

We had no theatre at St. Clement's, nor any regular performance of stage-plays. Sometimes, however, an itinerant company of actors would visit us for a few nights, in which case the performances were always given in the New Assembly Room. The old room was kept sacred for those quarterly gatherings of which I have already spoken.

Some of the gentlewomen had doubts as to the propriety of witnessing any representation of stage-plays, although they would go to see an orrery or a waxwork show, or even to an exhibition of conjuring,

with pleasure. But we were not all so strait-laced, especially when tickets were sent us, which was not unfrequently the case. Still, we always liked to know what we were going to see, and the oftener we saw any particular piece the better we were pleased. We did not, as a rule, care much for anything that could not be called a "standard play." Of course, Shakespeare came first—it was the proper thing to admire Shakespeare—but I fancy that in our hearts some of us preferred *The Heir-at-Law*, or *She Stoops to Conquer*, before *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. John Bull was a favourite with us, and we always enjoyed a good cry when *The Stranger* was played. We knew that with adaptations from the *Waverley Novels* we were always on safe ground; but I think that Sheridan was a little too brilliant for us. Indeed, I heard Miss Whincop say, on one occasion, that she very much doubted whether the morals of any young person would be improved by witnessing such a play as *The School for Scandal*.

But in all matters relating to Shakespeare, or indeed to the stage generally, Miss Damer was our great authority. Several years previously, in fact, when quite a young woman, she had played a small part in some amateur theatricals; besides which, when a girl, she had actually been taken by her father behind the scenes of a London theatre. Such a varied experience could not be overlooked, especially when we add to it the fact, that among Miss Damer's small stock of books were three or four volumes of Cumberland's *Plays*, and that over her chimney-piece hung an engraving of Garrick in the character of Richard the Third.

Miss Damer was a tall, thin, youngish-looking lady, who wore her own hair in the shape of two long flaxen curls, just tinged with gray, down each side of her face. But the curls were never visible till after three in the afternoon; earlier in the day nothing could be seen of them, but the papers in which they were screwed up. Miss Damer had eyes of an undefined colour and a long straight nose, slightly red at the tip. She was very proud of her arched instep, which, I have often heard her say, was a sign of high breeding, and sometimes, on state occasions, she wore low shoes and sandals. She was of a very sentimental turn of mind, and often, when I was a girl, she would bribe me with a piece of cake, while she recited long passages to me out of *Romeo and Juliet*.

I quite understood, although the desire was never put into words, that it was not intended that I should mention these private recitations to anyone. And I never did.

I remember on one occasion she took me very much into her confidence. Having first bolted the outer door, so that we might be secure from interruption, she unlocked an old-fashioned bureau, and from a secret drawer brought forth three valentines, all of them gray and dingy with age. How long had they been there I wonder? Not less than thirty summers I should opine. She opened and smoothed them out with tender and reverent fingers. As she did so, a few withered rose-leaves fell to the ground. As well as I remember, two of them contained nothing but verses, but the third displayed a burning heart stuck through with an arrow. Tears came into Miss Damer's eyes as she looked at the faded writing and yellow paper. She caressed them softly with the tips of her fingers.

"They were sent by some one very dear to you?" I ventured to whisper.

"Well, my dear, to tell you the truth," she said, "I never found out for certain who it was that sent them, although, of course, I had my suspicions at the time. If they came from the gentleman I mean, he was very, very handsome, and I have reason to believe that he is unmarried to this day."

"Then why did he not speak? Why did he not tell you that he loved you?" I asked, a little impatiently.

"Ah, my dear, there were obstacles in the way—insuperable obstacles. My father was a terrible man."

"But still the gentleman spoke to you?" I said; "or let you know by some other means that he loved you?"

"No, we never spoke to each other," she said, a little plaintively. "But he used to look at me in such a way when we passed each other in the street, that I felt sure he was fond of me. And, indeed, who but he could have sent me these valentines?"

Miss Damer had a great notion of her gentility, and I am afraid that she was considerably perturbed and annoyed when one day—a few months after the opening of the railway—she was called upon by a certain cousin of hers, Captain Armstrong by name. In the first place, Captain Armstrong was not the most presentable of men; and, in the second place, he was

only a captain in the merchant service. He was a broad-set, black-whiskered, jovial man, with a loud laugh, and rings in his ears. He drank rum-and-water and smoked strong tobacco; it was even whispered that he found another use for tobacco besides smoking it. Such a person had never invaded the staid precincts of the Endowment before. It was Miss Matthewson who dubbed him The Mahogany Captain, partly, I think, in allusion to his complexion, and partly to his business, which was understood to be voyaging from Liverpool to foreign parts and bringing back cargoes of the wood after which she had named him. He was not long in letting his cousin know that he had come to St. Clement's on law business, and that his visit was likely to last two or three weeks. He had taken up his quarters at the Black Swan—quite a third-rate tavern—but he took care to inform Miss Damer that, as she was the only relative he had in those parts, he would not fail to look in for an hour or two every afternoon during his stay, and cheer her up with his company.

The second time he came he brought two bottles of Jamaica rum with him, and smoked so much strong tobacco in Miss Damer's little parlour, that the poor lady was nearly choked. And then her window-curtains! She had put a new pair up only a fortnight before, and already they were so impregnated with smoke that she felt sure they would never be sweet again.

So wretched, in fact, was Miss Damer made by the visit of her loud-voiced cousin, that she felt compelled to resort to Miss Whincop for advice. But that lady, usually so gracious to anyone in trouble, gave her only a chilling reception. The fact was, that we all knew Captain Armstrong quite well by name from having heard Miss Damer speak so often about him; but somehow, though I'm sure I don't know how it came about, we were all under the impression that he was a captain in the Royal Navy. I don't think Miss Damer ever told us that such really was the case; but she must have known what our belief was in the matter, and she had never cared to disturb it. Therefore it was that Miss Whincop gave her such a cool reception. That lady felt herself aggrieved, in that she had not been told at first what Captain Armstrong's position really was. Had she but been told, she would have been the first to help Miss

Damer out of her difficulty. As the case stood, she declined to interfere.

"Can I do anything to help you, dear? If so, I'm sure you may command me in any way."

It was Miss Fyvie who spoke. She had met Miss Damer, as the latter was coming back disconsolately from her interview with Miss Whincop.

Miss Damer shook her head and sighed, but said nothing. Her tears soon came, and tears stood in her eyes now.

"I can at least help you to keep your cousin company, if you wouldn't mind my being there."

"Oh, if you would only do that," said Miss Damer, clasping her hands fervently. "But you have no idea what a bear he is!"

"But bears can sometimes be taught to dance. However, I'll bring my knitting in at half-past three to-morrow, and if two of us can't manage him, be he ever such a big bear, we'll know the reason why."

Miss Damer went her way slightly comforted, but only slightly. Miss Fyvie was the last lady in the Endowment whom, of her own accord, she would have thought of calling in to assist her in the onerous task of entertaining Captain Armstrong.

Miss Fyvie had not been very long with us at that time. She was only just over the requisite age when elected. There was something, at once so winning and sweet-tempered, about her that everybody liked her. She was very undemonstrative, and her manners were timid and retiring in the extreme. She had a very low, sweet voice; but then, as Miss MacArthur remarked, she had so little to say for herself that her voice was of no consequence. A more unlikely person to entertain Captain Armstrong could hardly have been imagined.

But be that as it may, there she was, knitting away in Miss Damer's parlour, when the captain stalked in.

"Well, Bessy, my hearty, and how are we by this time?" he said. "Why, you look as down in the dumps as if your grog had been stopped for a week of Sundays." He spoke as he might have done on board his ship in half a gale of wind. Miss Damer's reply was to introduce him to Miss Fyvie. The captain tugged at his forelock, gave a backward sweep with his right leg, and held out a huge brown paw. "I'm very glad to meet you, ma'am," he said—and very heartily he said it too. "Here's to the ladies, God bless 'em!" This was his favourite toast over his rum-and-water; but he was so fond either of

the sentiment or of the ladies, that he not unfrequently introduced it into general conversation.

"Thank you very much," said Miss Fyvie with a smile. "Next time you are desirous of shaking hands with me, you shall take hold of one end of my knitting-needle and I of the other. You shall squeeze my needle as hard as you like, but not my hand again, if you please."

"I—I ask your pardon"—looking rather sheepish—"but ladies' hands are so tender, and——"

"And yours are so strong. You would not take hold of a delicate china cup in the same way that you would of a tin pannikin, would you?"

"Thank you, ma'am; I quite understand, and next time I shake hands with a lady I won't forget."

"And now, captain, do pray sit down. I'm dying to hear some of your adventures. Don't tell me you've never had any. What is the use of sailors but to have adventures, and tell them to their friends on shore?"

Captain Armstrong drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and winked solemnly at Miss Fyvie.

"Wouldn't it be as well, ma'am, just to wet one's whistle a bit, and we could talk about the adventures afterwards?"

There was a bottle and a half of rum left out of the two bottles the captain had brought yesterday. This Miss Damer now made haste to bring out. Then she brought hot water, sugar, and a lemon. The captain liked his grog hot and strong, with plenty of sugar in it, and one squeeze of lemon. The due and proper concoction of his grog was one of the serious responsibilities of his life. "I wish I could persuade you ladies to have a thimbleful," he said. "It's a mighty fine mixture, I can tell you."

But of course the ladies declined. Then he said to Miss Fyvie:

"At least, ma'am, you can't be hard-hearted enough to refuse to sweeten a poor fellow's glass for him."

With the prettiest air imaginable—so Miss Damer afterwards said—Miss Fyvie took up the captain's glass, and, putting it to her lips, sipped as much of the mixture as a canary might have done.

The captain, his great brown face beaming with delight, took the glass from her and gallantly kissed the place which her lips had touched. Then he said:

"Here's to the ladies, God bless 'em! Bessy, my girl, here's long life and happiness to you! To you, ma'am, I can only

say: May your bright eyes never grow dim, and may your sweet smile never be less sweet than at this present moment; although, mind you, I wouldn't like to be answerable for all the hearts them eyes and that smile have broken." Then he half emptied his glass, smacked his lips gravely, and remarked, "That there's uncommon good tippie."

Diving presently into the pocket of his rough pilot-coat, he produced therefrom a huge tobacco pouch and a meerschaum pipe black with much use. He was proceeding slowly and gravely to fill his pipe when, happening to look up, his eyes caught those of Miss Fyvie fixed full upon him. She was sitting with one end of her knitting-needle pressed to her lips, and looking straight at him. He moved his hands uneasily, and began to whistle under his breath. Then he looked up again, and finding those two clear eyes still fixed upon him, he stopped in the process of filling his pipe, and said in a defiant sort of way: "I suppose there's no objection to my having half-a-dozen whiffs?"

"I don't think I would smoke, Captain Armstrong, if I were you," said Miss Fyvie, in her low, clear voice, and still keeping her eyes full on him.

"And may I ask, ma'am, why you wouldn't smoke if you were me?" he growled, looking as black as thunder.

Miss Damer was frightened, and, waiting to hear no more, rose suddenly and left the room.

But the captain did not smoke. What magic Miss Fyvie made use of to induce him to forego his favourite pleasure, no one ever knew. It was hinted at the time that, as a reward for not smoking, she allowed him to make use of tobacco after that other fashion, of which mention has been already made. But of that I know nothing.

When Miss Damer entered the room, a quarter of an hour later, the captain was deep in the narration of some humorous anecdote, over which he and Miss Fyvie were laughing quite heartily.

In a little while it was time for tea—a meal which, as a rule, the captain held in the utmost contempt. To-day, however, he was coaxed into drinking two whole cupfuls, duly flavoured with a little rum; and when Miss Fyvie toasted him a muffin, and buttered it with her own white hands, his delight knew no bounds.

After tea came more sea-tales, in all of which Miss Fyvie professed a lively in-

terest. Then, as a great favour, Miss Fyvie was induced to sing. She had a thin, sweet, quavering voice, with a good deal of latent pathos in it. She struck up Auld Robin Gray. By the time she had got to the end of the second verse, the captain was drumming softly on the table with his fingers, and gazing frowningly into the fire. By the time the last verse was reached he was fairly crying, with his head in his hands, and his great red-and-yellow bandana pressed to his eyes.

"God bless you, ma'am! God bless you!" he said. "It does a man's heart good to listen to you. That's the sort of singing I should like to hear in Heaven."

It was very irreverent of Captain Armstrong to make such a remark; but I think—and Miss Whincop thought so too at the time—that his meaning was good, and, in that case, perhaps the irreverence may have been forgiven him.

Soon after this it was time to go; but not till more rum-and-water had been discussed. With her own hands Miss Fyvie knotted the captain's comforter round his throat—for the night was frosty—and tucked the ends inside his coat. She did more than that; she asked him for his pouch and pipe, and deftly filled the latter with tobacco, as though she had been accustomed to do it all her life. Then she held a match while he lighted the pipe. Then he squeezed Miss Fyvie's fingers gently between his two rough palms; and, after that, he drew his cousin to him, and kissed her, much to that lady's discomfiture. Then he muttered a few words, which seemed hard to get out, about its having been one of the happiest nights of his life. Then he went, puffing away furiously at his pipe, as though to make up for lost time.

"There, my dear; I think we have made Bruin dance very prettily," said Miss Fyvie, with a smile as she shut the door after him.

"I can't think how you did it. It was just wonderful," said Miss Damer, with hands and eyes raised in wonderment.

The result was that, whenever the captain called on his cousin, he was not satisfied unless Miss Fyvie was there to entertain him; and poor Miss Damer begged so hard that she might not be left alone to cope with her terrible relative, that Miss Fyvie felt there was nothing for it but to comply. She did not go unrewarded. One day the captain brought a large parcel with him, which, on being opened, proved to contain two black silk dresses—one for

each of the ladies—of which he begged their acceptance. Another time he brought each of them a large package of tea. It was a sore point with him that he could never persuade them into liking rum-and-water.

The captain never failed to announce his arrival at the Endowment. As soon as he got through the gateway, he used to put his hand to his mouth, and bawl out "Shipah-o-o-y!" so that we always knew when he was among us. His acquaintance with the ladies of the Endowment was not confined to his cousin and Miss Fyvie. By-and-by he was introduced to Miss Anstruther and Miss Matthewson, also to my aunt; but Miss Damer never ventured to ask Miss Whincop or Miss Lawson to meet him. The ladies quite took to him, when once they had got over his boisterous ways. He was so hearty and good-humoured, there was such a breezy joviality about him, and he made himself so much at home in our society, that it was impossible to help liking him. He was very fond of cards; but unfortunately his whist-playing was simply atrocious. Cribbage was his favourite game, he said, and, after that, a merry game of speculation. None of the ladies knew cribbage, but they could all play speculation; so it came to pass that most evenings there was a sociable round game for a couple of hours in Miss Damer's little parlour. Captain Armstrong always came provided with ten shillings' worth of coppers. I don't know how it was, but it always happened that by the close of the evening his stock of coppers had disappeared. He must have been either a very unfortunate or a very reckless player. He never once rose from the table a winner. But the curious part of it was, that the more money he lost the more heartily he laughed, and the better he seemed to be pleased. He always would have Miss Fyvie sit next to him; and he always looked to her to fill his pipe and give him a light, the last thing before taking his leave.

By the middle of the third week the captain's law business was at an end; and it was time for him to think of leaving St. Clement's. Such of the gentlewomen as had come to know him heard of his departure with regret. His visit had brightened up their quiet lives for a little while, and would form quite an epoch in the annals of the Endowment. What with his sea-yarns, his card-playing, and his noisy but unfailing good-humour, it would

be a long time before the Mahogany Captain ceased to be talked about.

His last act was characteristic. To each of the ladies whose acquaintance he had made he sent a stone bottle containing a gallon of the best old Jamaica rum. His last visit to the Endowment was made an hour before the starting of the coach that was to carry him away. Miss Fyvie, thinking that he might prefer to be left alone with his cousin, had stayed at home; but he at once caused her to be sent for. Then Miss Damer left the two together, while she went into the kitchen to prepare for her cousin's grog. This was evidently the looked-for opportunity, and the captain at once cleared his throat and hitched his chair a little nearer the chair of Miss Fyvie.

"Miss Fyvie and ma'am," he began; "if I was to try I couldn't tell you how much I've enjoyed my visit to this quiet little nook."

"I am greatly pleased to hear you say so, Captain Armstrong."

"And as for the ladies I've met here, I feel as if I loved 'em every one. No—that's not quite what I meant," he added, colouring up and rubbing his hot palms with his bandana. "Anyhow, here's to their health, God bless 'em! But as for love, ma'am—real, downright, hearty love, there's only one creecher in the world I've got that feeling for; and that fair creecher is you, ma'am. Yes, Miss Fyvie, though I've only known you for three short weeks, my heart's gone. The poor thing's blown clean away to leeward, and I shall never find it more."

"Why, you great goose," said Miss Fyvie, tartly, "don't you know that I'm old enough to be your mother!"

"No, ma'am," said the captain, with a solemn shake of the head, "begging your pardon, you're not old enough to be my mother. There can't be more than a matter of ten years between us. I'm nigh on for forty, and you're—well, never mind what you are. What's a difference of ten years, or fifteen years, or twenty years, when two people love one another? I love you, and if you'll say that you'll take me for better for worse, why we'll be man and wife afore this day week."

"It's quite out of the question, Captain Armstrong. Such an idea is altogether preposterous."

He waved his hand gently, but took no further notice of the interruption. "My ship, the Lively Sally, sails from Liverpool on Monday week, bound for Honduras. Be my wife, and go out in her as the skipper's

skipper; go out in her, ma'am, and see the world. Say but the word, and this next voyage shall be my last. I've a little lump put by and a snug little cottage at Rock Ferry, and I need never put foot on board ship again without I like. Say yes, and make a poor devil happy."

"No, Captain Armstrong. No."

"I've neither chick nor child, nor anybody in this wide world to care for me."

"It cannot be. Pray—pray believe me when I say so." She was standing up now, her hands trembling a little, and her face very pale. On that pale face the captain's eyes were now bent. He read there that his suit was hopeless.

"Then it's no use my saying another word?" He whispered the words rather than spoke them.

"No use at all, dear Captain Armstrong."

He turned away to the window. Next moment Miss Damer came in. The captain did not sit down again, but drank his grog in silence, and then made his adieus.

One day, quite three years after the Mahogany Captain's visit, as Miss Fyvie was turning over some of her hoarded treasures in search of a portrait of her father that she wanted to show me, among other articles in her bureau I chanced to see a certain quaintly-carved tobacco-stopper, that I recognised in a moment as having been the captain's property. I remembered quite well his losing it one evening (he had pulled it out of his pocket among some loose change), and our fruitless search for it. However, there it was, safe and sound, in Miss Fyvie's possession; but I never even hinted to her that I had seen it, nor did she ever speak of it to me.

WHAT HE COST HER.

BY JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "AT HER MERCY,"
"HALVES," &c.

CHAPTER XXXI. "NEITHER TO-NIGHT NOR EVER."

WHAT Cecil had to say to his father that took him away so abruptly from his home, upon that first night of his return, concerns us but little; the matter, however, would seem to have been important, since the upshot was, as he told the two ladies at the breakfast-table the next morning, that Mr. Landon, senior, as head of the firm, insisted upon his return to Wellborough, where affairs required his personal superintendence.

"It is an infernal nuisance," said he; "but when one has once put one's hand 'to the plough of business,' as the governor says, 'there is no looking back'—and very little, he might have added, to which to look forward; for my part I see no end to the work."

He glanced at both women as he spoke. Ella only replied by a hard smile; but Gracie said:

"But surely, Mr. Landon, you can give a guess as to how long you are likely to be detained from home?"

"Indeed I cannot," he answered. "We are opening a branch establishment farther south, from which my father expects great things; and I am bound to look after it, until it is set going, as well as to manage matters at Wellborough."

At this moment the letters were brought in. Gracie took hers from the salver; she saw her own lying on it that she had written to Cecil, and which had been forwarded to him. She had half a mind to claim it; but her courage failed her, and the next instant it was in Cecil's hand. She felt that, whatever benefit might have been once secured from it, it was useless now; that it had, as it were, missed fire; and that the sight of the weapon would only make more angry the man at whom it had been aimed.

He read it, with his other letters, without comment; and presently went off as usual to the office.

"Oh, Ella, I am so sorry that that letter found him here," said Gracie penitently, as soon as they were alone.

"What does it matter?" returned Ella bitterly. "Fifty letters would not move him, wherever they had found him. He came home to quarrel with me, and at last he has succeeded."

There was a world of significance about that "at last." She had restrained herself, as she had never thought it possible for her to do; had shown no "temper;" had been submissive, gentle, pleading; and all to no purpose. He had rejected all her advances towards a reconciliation. She would throw herself at his feet no longer to be thus trodden upon.

"But this is so dreadful, Ella. Perhaps I was wrong to persuade you not to appeal to his father. There is that course still left to you."

"Not now, Gracie," answered she, in a hard, stern voice. "He went out last night to have the first word with the old man; to persuade him that what he himself wished to do was the best thing

to be done. He will not return home any more."

"Oh, that is impossible, Ella. He has not even taken leave of you. Whatever has misled him and altered him so, he would never do that; it would be so cruel, so unmanly."

"Cruel, of course it is. Unmanly, no, Gracie; men are all cowards when they have once resolved to be base."

"Nay, I am sure that your husband is no coward, Ella."

"He would fight another man, if you mean that," returned Ella, contemptuously; "but he fears the woman he has injured. He dared not once look me in the face. Did you not see it?"

Gracie had noticed that; but she did not say so. She was not one of those women who take a pleasure in widening a breach between their friends and their husbands. On the contrary, she would have given all she had to bridge over this great and terrible gulf, the proportions of which had by this time become apparent to her. She was filled with righteous indignation against Cecil; but she felt it was her duty not to show it, and even to make excuses for him, if excuse should be possible.

"Your husband looks so ill, Ella," she said, presently, "and so unlike himself, that I think there may be some physical reason for his conduct. I really do."

"He seems to me well enough," said Ella.

"I wonder at your saying that. I don't wish to frighten you; but do you not think it possible that that railway accident shook him more than he liked to say? Some men hate to talk of their ailments; and did you not observe how he shrank from any allusion to the collision?"

"I did notice that," said Ella, a ray of hope breaking in upon the night of her soul. "If there is anything wrong with him—with his brain, I mean—that would of course account for his conduct. I should never forgive myself—But there; such a thing is, to the last degree, improbable."

"Let us hope so, Ella; but it is not improbable that, for other reasons, you may one day say, 'I shall never forgive myself' as respects your husband. Think as charitably of him as you can, darling; you love him dearly, even yet; and he loves you, though something, which we do not understand, has for the moment come between you."

Ella shook her head, and sighed deeply. "No, Gracie; his love is gone. The void

is here"—she laid her hand upon her heart—"a cold and aching void. I am not sure even that I still love him."

"But I am sure, Ella; and that you pity him. Even I do that. If ever I saw wretchedness in any face, it was in that of your husband as he left this room."

"He is dissatisfied with himself, as well he may be, no doubt," said Ella. "I did not say he had no conscience."

No one, indeed, with any claims to be an observer of human nature, could have said that, who had beheld Cecil Landon's face that morning as he set it Citywards. It was, in fact, the very index of a mind, if not remorseful, yet very ill at ease. Gloomy it was, yet not morose; oppressed with the sense of ill-doing; and, perhaps, one would have now added, conscious of more ill to be done. With his hat pressed over his brows, and one hand thrust in his pocket, he walked quickly on for a mile or two after leaving his own house, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Then he consulted his watch and called a cab, giving somewhat elaborate directions to the driver before he entered it.

At the corner of a small street, in the City, and at some distance from his own office, he dismissed it, and walked on as before, except that he took some note of the houses on his side of the way. They were all places of business, and most of them occupied by several sets of tenants. At one of these he stopped, and looked down the list of names with some attention. About midway, newly painted in, was that of "C. Landon, Commission Agent." He went upstairs and, taking a latch-key from his pocket, opened a door upon the second-floor that bore this name—his own—upon it. The room he entered was a spacious one, newly furnished in office style; but he cast but one rapid glance around him, as if to make sure that it had no tenant, rather than to note its contents. Then he closed the door, and opened the letter-box that, as usual, depended from it. There was but a single letter, nor—it was evident—did he expect to find a second. It was directed, "Cecil Landon, Esq., Brantstreet," in a female hand.

"I told her it was unnecessary to put 'Cecil,'" he muttered peevishly. But there was no peevishness in his face as his eyes fell on the closely-written pages; it was illumined with a glow of expectation that deepened into delight as he read on. The perturbation of his mind had ceased; his trouble, whatever it was, was forgotten, smoothed away by that distant, and to us

unknown, hand. When he had read all, he put the letter to his lips, and kissed it.

He looked quite another man from that one who had left his home an hour ago; though not a better man. There was a fire in his eye which spoke of triumph; but it was most assuredly not that most glorious of all victories—the victory which a man gains over himself. It was the exultation rather of one who has yielded to a great temptation, and promises himself a supreme bliss from which he has been hitherto debarred by scruples. This expression, however, was but momentary; having folded up the letter and put it carefully away in his breast-pocket, his features reassumed their haggard look. It was like some magic charm, which, while its owner gazes at it, has the virtue of bestowing happiness, but, once out of sight, is powerless.

"I will get it to-day," he muttered, "this very day. I cannot endure to go to that house again." He was speaking of his home. "The air seemed poisoned there. And yet who has poisoned it?" Then with a hesitating voice, "Not—not poor Ella." His face grew tender, and pitiful; he burst into tears. "What an infernal hypocrite and scoundrel I feel," cried he with bitterness. "What a cruel and heartless brute. 'How could I—could I—treat her so! She has never deserved that, whatever she may have deserved.'"

He had sunk down into the chair beside the office-desk, and there he sat, all huddled together, like a man who has been hanged. Perhaps he deserved hanging; he had at all events suffered something of that mental agony which is said to precede the operation. He had grown to look so old within those five minutes, that he might have passed for his own father. Curiously enough—for he was not a "self-conscious" man or one given to self-examination—he was cognisant of his own mental condition. "I feel like a whipped hound," he murmured on; "a creature like Whympers-Hobson is a man compared with me; but there, I have gone through with it. I have broken with her. She must feel that. And she is not one to cling where she has been spurned. It is better so, and I did it for her sake."

He said this in a firm voice, and looked round about him with a defiant air, as though challenging contradiction. Unhappily, Conscience—who alone was present—is like Punch in the puppet-show; she eludes a knock-down blow, and has a most dexterous vitality. She can also be very vulgar, and

what she whispered in Mr. Landon's ear upon the present occasion was, "Liar." "Yes, it was for her sake, just as the surgeon uses the knife to prevent lifelong mischief. It was the actual cautery, in her case, poor soul, without the chloroform. And this is for her sake, too," he went on, looking round the newly-papered, newly-furnished room. "It is to spare her; and keep things quiet as long as may be. The hardest trial is over for both of us; for I suffered too, Heaven knows. There shall be no more such days. I will get it this afternoon, and go down by the evening train. In the meantime I must make all straight with my father; a difficult matter, I should have thought at one time; but, compared with what has been surmounted, a very easy task, and, what is better, painless." With a deep sigh he rose and left the room, closing the door behind him, which fastened with a spring lock. As he reached the bottom of the stairs, "C. Landon, Commission Agent," again caught his eye. "A pretty commission have I to do to-day," muttered he bitterly. Then he bent his steps to Wethermill-street. His father, whose habits were punctual and exact as the movements of a machine, arrived a few minutes after him, as the clock was striking ten.

"What, so early, Cecil?" cried he cheerfully. "You have turned over a new leaf, indeed."

"Well, it was necessary to be early down at Wellborough, father; where a six-hours' work is spread over the whole twelve."

"Ay, I know their ways," said the old citizen, rubbing his hands. "Those country fellows are half asleep till dinner-time, when they wake up with a vengeance."

"After which they take their regular nap," put in Cecil. "Still they are sure, if they are slow. There are no speculations on their private account, with defalcations to follow. There is life and hope in that idea of the branch, I think, though the results may not appear immediately."

"No, begad, they won't do that. However, that is your own affair, my boy, more than mine. When I am a sleeping partner—under the turf—you will reap that crop if there is any. I have taken your word as to the prospects of a harvest."

"I think it will do, father. Indeed, there is a good deal more to be carried off that field—I speak of the West generally—than we have hitherto dreamt of."

"Gleanings, my lad, only gleanings. However, Heaven forbid that I should dash your hopes. I am delighted to see

you entertain them, whether you are right or wrong. I never thought to see you take so great an interest in the matter, I confess, and it gratifies me extremely. Why, you'll be the business man of the firm, if you go on like this."

"What I do, I like to do thoroughly," returned Cecil indifferently. "I only left my work yesterday to come up to consult you—"

"And to see Ella, I suppose," put in the old gentleman roguishly.

"Well, yes, of course, to see Ella."

"And how does she like the prospect of your running away from her so soon again?"

"I think she has made up her mind to it, sir."

"Then I think she's a deuced good-natured girl, and very easily convinced."

"I don't see that," said Cecil coldly. "She knows it's for our good, and the good of the firm. And it is not as if she was alone, you know: she has got her friend, Gracie Ray."

"Ay, a very nice-looking young woman; I remember her. I don't think you would find Miss Gracie, if she was Mrs. Cecil Landon, quite so complaisant as Ella. It struck me she was a bit of a Tartar. But as to Ella, I confess I was wrong when I doubted the wisdom of your making her your wife. She is one of a thousand, sir, just fitted to be the wife of a man who has got his hands full of business; not extravagant; nor, what is still worse under such circumstances, exacting. You are a devilish lucky dog."

"So people say," said Cecil, who was sitting at his desk, and affected to be looking over some memoranda. "I have been telling her that the sooner I go down westward the sooner I shall get my work over. If I went to-day, for example, I could see Critchett about the mill to-night and set him going."

"To-day! Do you mean to say that Ella will let you go to-day, after six weeks' absence?"

"I think, sir, she is sensible enough to perceive the advantages of such a course."

The old gentleman put up his gold spectacles over his bushy eyebrows, in the rut they had formed for themselves in his forehead, and regarded his son attentively.

"You have had no quarrel with Ella, I hope, Cecil?" said he earnestly.

"Quarrel! Certainly not, sir. What makes you think that?"

"Nothing. I suppose folks change with the times; but in my day a young wife

would not be so easily induced to part with a young husband, just after they had been separated so long; that's all."

"It is the Age of Reason," said Cecil, with a short laugh.

"So I have heard it said," replied the old gentleman dryly. "Everything moves so fast too, that I daresay you both consider yourselves old married people."

To this Cecil made no reply, but his face grew a shade paler as he bent over his memoranda.

"You have no objection, then, father, to my returning to Wellborough at once?" observed he presently.

"Not I, if your wife has none. But I do think, in justice to her, Cecil, that you should not remain in the West indefinitely without sending for her."

"But you see, sir, I have to move about so much just now; it is not as if I were positively established at Wellborough."

"Well, well, you are the best judge of your own affairs. I never interfere in domestic matters. Let me look again at that estimate of Mr. Critchett's."

So that matter was settled, thanks to the preliminary talk which Cecil had had with his father on the previous night. It was not likely that the old gentleman would compare notes with Ella upon the subject, notwithstanding that he had put that word in on her behalf with her husband. He was, as he had said, not one to interfere in domestic matters, nor, indeed, in any matters out of his own line. He knew nothing of the society in which the young couple moved in London, and did not want to know anything. Social scandal never reached his ears, nor had he even so much as heard of that famous immersion of Mr. Whympers-Hobson in Virginia Water. He thought his son's conduct strange, as regarded his leaving Ella for such long intervals; but the fact was only a confirmation of a favourite theory of his own—that all things were changed since his young days. He acquiesced in it too the more readily on account of the new-born interest which Cecil had lately taken in the business, and which was the pretext for his present behaviour. We do not commonly look very keenly into the motives of any action which gives us both pleasure and profit.

There was something else to be done in London that morning by Cecil Landon,

besides the business in Wethermill-street, and he did it. Then he returned to the office, and wrote the following note to his wife:

"DEAR ELLA,—My father and I are both agreed that the sooner I get back to Wellborough the better, as affairs there are very pressing. I shall therefore go straight down there this afternoon from the City terminus. Be so good as to forward to me, addressed as usual, to the Eagle Hotel, the bag and portmanteau which are in my dressing-room. With kind regards to Gracie,—
Yours,
"CECIL LANDON."

"P.S. I shall be moving about for some days in the West in connection with our new venture, but shall be at Wellborough probably on Monday."

This letter was, designedly, not posted at once, but reached its destination about five o'clock, when its writer was already seated in the Great Western express. Ella and Gracie were sitting together when it arrived over their "afternoon tea," a fashion which had just then come into vogue.

Ella read the note, and threw it across to her friend without comment, save what her face said.

"Then he is not coming back to-night, Ella?"

She strove in vain to make her tone indifferent, for she was in fact not only surprised, but shocked.

"No, neither to-night nor ever. Did I not tell you?"

Then she rose and went upstairs, and finding, as she expected, the bag and portmanteau already packed, despatched them to the address indicated. She did one thing more, she locked the dressing-room door and took the key away. It was henceforth a Blue Beard's chamber to her, haunted by memories hardly less terrible than murdered wives.

NOTE.—The present proprietor of Bonython has requested the Conductor of this Journal to state, that the description given of the house by the author of the article, "On the Way to the Lizard,"* is not in accordance with the facts; but that Bonython is in "perfect repair, and kept with the care usually bestowed upon a gentleman's residence."

In making the desired correction, the writer of the article has to express his regret that, owing to his having been misinformed on the subject, he should have fallen into so unfortunate an error.

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, Vol. 17, p. 208, "On the Way to the Lizard."

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